

LABOUR:

ITS

RIGHTS, DIFFICULTIES, DIGNITY,

AND

CONSOLATIONS.

A PAPER

READ BEFORE THE HULL MECHANICS' INSTITUTE

ON

THURSDAY, JANUARY 3, 1956,

BY

SAMUEL WARREN, ESQ., D.C.L.

ONE OF HER MAJESTY'S COUNSEL, AND RECORDER OF HULL.

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done; and the Council have the utmost satisfaction in being thus enabled to place this important Lecture in the hands of those whose vital interests it so deeply concerns.

BETHEL JACOBS,
President of the Hull Mechanics' Institute.

Hull, January, 1856.

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LABOUR:

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FRIENDS AND FELLOW-LABOURERS,

Lord Bacon, in one of his immortal essays, declares that "A crowd is not company, and faces are but a gallery of pictures, and talk is but a tinkling cymbal, where there is no love." Here, however, we have a crowd, which *is* company; faces, which are not a mere gallery of pictures, but flesh and blood realities; and (as I earnestly hope), talk which shall not be but a tinkling cymbal; and why? Because there *is* love here—a love linking all our hearts together, by reason of a perfect sympathy in respect of toils, privations, hopes, and fears, which we share together as *fellow-labourers*, in the respective spheres of action assigned to us by Providence. Our bond of union is labour, whether mental or manual, whether skilled or unskilled. Our Maker did not so exquisitely construct our brains and our hands, make the one obey the other, and place us in circumstances compelling us to use both, without a grand purpose; nor did He afterwards add hard and painful conditions to that labour, without a cause, sad and humbling, alas! to his fallen creature, but salutary to be borne in mind, by every man, woman, and child coming into the world! And as our brains and our hands were given us for a great purpose, so did He give us hearts, to yearn towards one another; to throw the lustre of love over our common toils; to incline us to help one another, affectionately, along the journey of life,—and all the more lovingly, the more thorny the path; thereby making *the wilderness to rejoice and blossom as the rose*. He has so marvellously ordered the

course of His Divine Providence, as to have made us all necessary to one another, by our wants and wishes of every sort, and the means of satisfying them by the exertion of some kind or other of labour. He is perpetually reminding us, moreover, that we are not like the animals that perish, many of whom work far harder than any of us, and often more wonderfully far—but fellow-travellers, through, and beyond, this scene of action and of trial in which He has thought fit to place us for a season; that labourers as we are, each one of us—wherever on the earth, and of what colour soever he be, bears impressed on him the dread image of his Maker, in respect of our moral and intellectual nature;—each has burning within him the lamp of immortality, which, be it for good or for evil destiny, must burn on for ever; each has a knowledge of there being duties owing to his God, and to one another; and as time melts away, we are all approaching a place where *we rest from our labours: the small and the great are there, and the servant is free from his master.*

The subject of human labour is one very affecting to contemplate, and difficult to deal with, especially when our time is so limited as to night. The statesman, the philanthropist, the lawyer, look at labour from widely distant points of view, as far as concerns their immediate practical purposes; but all aim, or profess to aim, at a common object, the welfare of mankind: they feel themselves concerned with a vast reality, demanding to be dealt with at once cautiously and comprehensively; since its relations are entwined with every social interest whatever. Ignorance of the rights of labour, indeed, is ignorance of almost everything that can entitle a man to act in public life, or conduct his own affairs, with the least degree of credit or even safety; and I undertake to say, that a careful study of those rights, of their true foundations, and gradual development, tends to sober, to strengthen, to expand, and elevate the thoughts of the student, (if he bear ever in mind that he is doing it for practical purposes), more than any other single branch of human science. It involves so much political and legal knowledge, that it largely and intimately acquaints us with the history of our species, in the most important and interesting stages of their social progress. The more a man sees, and deeply reflects upon, the nature of labour,—upon the sensitive and complete character of the relations which exist in a free country between employer and employed,—the quicker will he be in detecting, the more anxiously energetic in guarding against, the consequences of rash interference with such a subject, legislatively or otherwise. Now I acknowledge myself able to deal but feebly with that subject, though having devoted to it much of my attention for many years. Still I shall make the attempt, to night, honestly, and as briefly as possible, to present to you some of the results of my own observation and reflections, grouped

under the four words which I have not inconsiderately chosen.—The RIGHTS, the DIFFICULTIES, the DIGNITY, and the CONSOLATIONS of labour. When saying that the four words indicating the scope of this lecture, have been not inconsiderately chosen, let me assure you, that the only claims I prefer to your serious attention to-night, are founded on the pains I have taken to exhibit to you a faithful picture of a subject of no common difficulty, and of the deepest interest to all present, and on my having come before you on your own repeated invitation: which, considering my public and grave relations to this place, I found it impossible any longer to resist. But so foreign to my pursuits and purposes, and inconsistent with my avocations, is the appearing on occasions like this, that I intend it to be the last time, as it is also the first, of my appearing before a Mechanics' Institute, any where. I feel it necessary to say this for various reasons. Being however, here, I sincerely assure you, that I am anxious to speak in a spirit of brotherly affection and respect, and only those things which may be worthy of your consideration, for practical purposes. As I do not presume, then, to be your teacher, so neither can I descend to be your flatterer, nor be guilty of aiming at personal display. For both these objects, time and the occasion are infinitely too precious and I have too much respect for you, and myself.

We, that are assembled here, belong to *the working classes*; we work for our living; some of us, more or less, with our heads, than our hands; but in a Mechanics' Institute, I shall concern myself chiefly with that description of labour which may be conveniently designated, as manual, or mechanical, in which so large a proportion of those present spend their lives. Let me, however, in passing, for a moment speak of labour of another kind, the labour of the mind, exclusively,—the hand only indicating and preserving the precious results of that patient and profound thought which, from age to age, gives purpose, direction, efficacy, and value to the other—to every other kind of labour whatever. The working classes! are those not worthy of the name, and in its very highest sense, few in number, comparatively, though they be, who by their noble powers of thought make those discoveries in science, which have given tenfold efficacy and value to labour, turned it suddenly into a thousand new channels—and conferred on all classes of society new conveniences and enjoyments? Are we to overlook those great intellects which have devoted themselves to statesmanship, to jurisprudence, to morals,—to the science of medicine—securing and advancing the permanent and best interests of mankind, and relieving them from physical anguish and misery;—the genius devoted to literature, refining, expanding, and elevating the minds of all capable of it, and whose immortal works are glittering like stars of the first magnitude, in the hemisphere of thought and

imagination ? No, my friends, let us not be so unthinking, unjust, or ungrateful ; let us rather be thankful to God for giving us men of such powers, and opportunity and inclination to exert them, not for their own reputation's sake alone, but for our advantage ; and let us never attempt to enhance the claims of manual, by forgetting or depreciating those of intellectual labour. I could, at this moment, give you a dozen instances within my personal knowledge, of men to whom God has given very little physical strength, but great mental endowments ; and who cheerfully undergo an amount of exhausting labour, of which you have no idea, in conducting public affairs, political and legal, and prosecuting scientific researches immortalizing the age in which they live. These, then,—men of letters, of science,—authors, philosophers, divines, statesmen, lawyers, physicians,—we not only admit among us into the ranks of the working classes, recognizing their power and grateful for its virtuous exercise—but welcome them with pride ; grudging them no honours and distinctions which society can confer upon them, and which, indeed, genius can command in all ages, as the spontaneous homage of mankind.

Let us now, however, descend from the rarified and radiant regions into which we have soared for a moment—where dwells high intellectual power ; but bear in mind its kindred toils, the toils of those whose anxieties and sacrifices are quite as great as any of ours, and whose glorious self-devotion should inspire ourselves in the contemplation.

“ Lives of great men all remind us,
 We can make our lives sublime,
 And, departing, leave behind us
 Footprints on the sands of time :
 Footprints, that perchance another
 Sailing o'er life's solemn main,
 A forlorn and shipwreck'd brother—
 Seeing, shall take heart again.” !

I.—First, then, of the RIGHTS of labour ; and I may sum them all up in these words—labour, in England, and in all her dominions all over the world, is FREE. We say, here, in language which was successfully used in the legislature, in 1824, that every law ought to be repealed, which shackles any man in the free disposition of his labour, provided that free disposition do not interfere with any vital interest, and thereby endanger the political existence of the state. A word or two about the pedigree, if I may so speak, of labour—a subject at which I glanced, but very gravely, a few minutes ago. “ Labour ” says one of the great lights of our country, Adam Smith, “ was the first price, the original purchase money, that was paid for all things. It was not by Gold, or by

“Silver, but *by Labour*, that all the wealth of the world was originally “purchased.” “It is the talisman that has raised man from the condition of the savage,” says a distinguished living Economist, “that has “changed the desert and the forest into cultivated fields; that has “covered the earth with cities, and the ocean with ships; that has given “us plenty, comfort, and elegance, instead of want, misery and barbarism.” But I proceed to present you with two noble passages—one by a great English, the other by a great French authority,—on which, much that I have to say, will form a practical commentary. And first, the Englishman. “The property which every man has in his own “labour, as it is the original foundation of all other property, so is it the “most sacred and inviolable. The patrimony of a poor man lies in the “strength and dexterity of his hands; and to hinder him from employing “his strength and dexterity in what manner he thinks proper, without “injury to his neighbour, is a plain violation of this most sacred property. “It is a manifest encroachment upon the just liberty of both the workman “and those who might be disposed to employ him. As it hinders the “one from working at what he thinks proper, so it hinders the other “from employing whom they think proper.” And now let us hear the Frenchman :

“Labour is the poor man’s property : no property is more sacred : and “neither time, nor authority can sanction the violation of his right freely “to dispose of this his only resource.” These are respectively the words of our own distinguished Adam Smith, and of the great and good Turgot, the minister of Louis XVI; and those words are worthy of being recorded in letters of gold. They are however only an expansion of my short proposition, that in England, *labour is free* : but what that practically means, what consequences it involves, is a matter of equal moment and difficulty to determine, as you may shortly see.

Let us glance, for one moment, at the famous two free states of antiquity, Greece and Rome. Labour was not free *there* ! A vast majority of the people were sunk in cruel and abject slavery. In free Greece, there seem to have been only about 30,000 freemen, to 400,000 slaves ! while in Rome there were private persons who owned as many as 4000 slaves, whom their masters could torture, aye, even to the death : and their great historian, Tacitus, has recorded the hideous and damning fact, that a master of consular rank, who owned 400 domestic slaves, having been murdered by one of them, all the remainder were at once put to death, according to the law of Rome,—free and enlightened Rome,—and with the deliberate approval of the senate ! And let the working classes of England look back a little into their own history, and they will see their predecessors also groaning in a state of absolute slavery—

called Villenage—a villein having been deemed as absolutely the property of his lord, as a dog, or a hog. He was unable to acquire, by his own labour, any property : all he earned belonged solely to his lord. He was held to be attached to the land and, poor wretch ! was sold with it ; torn from his family : his children were slaves : and if a male and female slave of different masters married, their masters claimed any children that might be born, and who were divided between them ! By the middle of the fourteenth century, however, the condition of a large proportion of these villeins had been improved into that of hired labourers. The first time that we hear of these on a grand scale, is in the year 1352 ; when, the fearful pestilence of 1348 had so reduced their numbers, that the legislature sternly interposed. “to deny the poor” in the indignant language of Mr. Hallam, “that transient amelioration of their lot, which the progress of population, or other analogous circumstances, will without any interference, very rapidly take away.” These poor creatures were naturally anxious to be better paid for their labour, when it had become so greatly increased in value ; but the legislature, in the time of Edward III, passed acts peremptorily fixing, with extreme precision, the rates at which both farm servants and mechanics should be obliged to work, on pain of punishment by fine and imprisonment. This was the memorable “Statute of Labourers,” passed just five centuries ago. To appreciate the space passed over—the shadow of the sun of liberty over the dial-plate of social progress—imagine an attempt in 1856, to pass the act of 1352 ! Labour, I repeat, is now free ; and why ? Let us bow our head in adoring gratitude, while acknowledging the blessed influence of christianity—proclaiming as with Archangel’s trumpet, the sublime words, HONOR ALL MEN ! * declaring thereby the equality of all before God, and addressing, moreover, its revelations in an especial manner to the poor. The fetters of slavery melt in the sunlight of christianity ; and here, in this glorious Island of ours, so pure is our air, that slavery perishes in it : you may see it coming ; but the instant it touches England it is gone, and lo ! a new *free*-man is seen, kissing with wild extacy the soil that has wrought the miracle. And so it is, too, with our glorious and gallant neighbour and ally, France : whose highest judicial tribunal declared, in the year 1840, that “it was an ancient and fundamental maxim of the law of France that every slave was free from the moment that he put his foot upon the soil of France.” Can I, however, stand here, in this old town of Hull, almost close to the statue of your illustrious Wilberforce, without thinking of him, of Clarkson, and of our other heroes of England, by whose magnificent exertions, in the ever memorable interval between 1806 and 1833, slavery was abolished

* 1 Peter, ii, 17.

throughout the British dominions—and England has been ever since entering into treaty after treaty, almost annually, with other states, for the abolition of Foreign slavery? Listen to the grand but not unmerited eulogy pronounced by one of the most justly celebrated men of America, the late Dr. Channing, on the conduct of this country in not only abolishing West India slavery, but doing it at a prodigious pecuniary sacrifice. “Great Britain, loaded with an unprecedented debt, “and with a grinding taxation, contracted a new debt of a hundred “millions of dollars, to give freedom, not to Englishmen, but the de- “graded African! I know not that history records an act so disinterested, “so sublime. In the progress of ages, England’s naval triumphs will “necessarily shrink into a more and more narrow space, in the records “of our race; but this moral triumph will fill a broader, brighter page”!

Let us now ask, however, what is really signified by the expression, that labour is free in England? simply this, that—subject to two or three exceptions founded on reason, justice, and humanity, which I will presently mention—every British subject may work at any kind of labour, for any person, anywhere, for any recompense, and for any space of time, that may be agreed upon between him and that other. I say he may work for anyone, *anywhere*: and repeat it, in order that I may apprise you that it is no longer ago than 1825, that all acts were repealed which prohibited, under heavy penalties and liabilities, a British artificer from going abroad! Down to that period,—though the mechanic were starving, and population redundant, still the prohibitory law was inexorable; and he was compelled to remain in his own country, instead of being allowed to earn an honest subsistence abroad. The legislature, however, was persuaded, at length, that, in the language of W. Huskisson, every man was entitled to carry that talent which God had given him, and those acquirements which his diligence had attained, to any market in which he was likely to obtain the highest remuneration, unless it could be shewn that there was any permanent and overwhelming necessity against it. The British workman has ever since been free, therefore, to compete with the artizans of the whole world, in ingenuity and industry. And when I say that a man may agree to serve for any length of time, I mean that he may, if he choose, contract to work for a particular person, for his whole life, according to the law of England, lately affirmed to be such, but in this respect, differing from that of France, where such a length of service is deemed inconsistent with personal freedom.—Again, by the law of England, whatever labour a man does for another,¹ is *primâ facie*, to be paid for, unless that other can shew that it was not. If every man’s labour is free, so every man has a property in his own labour: that is, his earnings—the fruits of them—are his own, with the following five important exceptions.—The

earnings of married women belong to their husbands ; of children to their parents ; of apprentices to their masters ; of convicts to the public ; and of paupers to the community by which they are maintained. In this last case, indeed, you must observe, that labour is imposed as a test of destitution ; for the express purpose of protecting the property of the industrious, in their own labour, as well as in all other property, being consumed by the able-bodied idle. As an Englishman is not a slave, but a free-man, he has a property not only in his manual labour, but in the exertion of his brain. While engaged in the service of another, if a workman happen, by the exercise of his own observation and thought, to make a discovery, the law gives him the full and exclusive benefit of it, though it may make him a thousand times richer than his employer. It would, however, be a very different matter, if that employer, having himself made a discovery, had employed a workman to carry it out, and the latter had suggested something calculated only more effectually or conveniently to do so. I need not here do more than remind you how carefully the law strives to encourage men of letters, of science, ingenuity, and in the fine arts ; by giving them copyright and patent right,—that is, a lengthened period of exclusive pecuniary interest in their respective compositions and inventions, by which very large fortunes are often made, and quite suddenly, as the just reward of thought and ingenuity.

The man who sells his labour to another must perform his contract, in every respect, with as punctual good faith as is required from the party purchasing it, or not only lose all advantage from it, but subject himself to liability either by a civil action, or criminally, under the provisions of various statutes passed for the protection of persons carrying on great manufactures, who might be quickly ruined, but for a summary remedy being afforded. In the year 1830 was passed an act exceedingly beneficial to the working man, called the Truck Act. “That system,” said the late Sir R. Peel, “had a direct tendency to undermine the independence of workmen. I can conceive nothing more calculated to reduce them to a state of servitude, than that their master, who might be getting “£8,000 or £10,000 a year by his manufactory, should take from them “£2,000 or £3,000 a year more, by dealing in bacon and cheese !—I am “favorable to the payment of wages in money, because it encourages “feelings of sobriety and independence ; and wish the poor man to have “an opportunity of laying by a little money for old age, as a portion for “a daughter, or a provision for his widow.” “The object of this act,” said lately one of our most learned living judges, Mr. Baron Parke, now raised to the peerage, as the reward of his long and admirable judicial labours, “which applies to those who contract to do work by their own “personal labour, is, to protect such men as earn their bread by the

“sweat of their brow, and are, for the most part, an unprotected class.” In the case of a master’s bankruptcy, a considerate legislature has empowered the court to order his servant’s wages, to the extent of £2, to be paid out of the estate, leaving him to prove for the rest; and the legislature has lately shewn also its regard for the sailor, by making his wages depend no longer on the ship’s earning freight, but on his rendering the service he had engaged to give; and he must be paid those wages, unless it can be clearly proved against him that he did not do his utmost, in case of shipwreck, to save the ship, cargo, and sails.—The abolition of the exclusive privileges of corporations, and of the necessity of serving a seven years’ apprenticeship, before being allowed to exercise a trade, has still further removed restrictions from the free exercise of labour; while our courts of justice are exceedingly jealous in permitting effect to be given to any agreement having that tendency. To one of our most important laws—that of the removal of the settled poor, passed in the reign of Charles II—has been long attributed, by Adam Smith and others, an oppressive and mischievous interference with the freedom of labour in the poorer classes. It certainly seems to impede the free circulation of labour, and consequently, to be injurious to both employers and employed; and the legislature, having, ten years ago, taken a step in that direction, by making a poor person irremovable after residing five years in a parish, has recently tried, though not hitherto successfully, to abolish the law of removal altogether: but this is a step attended with serious difficulties in adjusting equitably the burthen of poor relief.

If we have thus seen the legislature interfering, in a bold and wise spirit, to emancipate labour from shackles which ought not to be imposed upon it in a free country, and courts of law zealously seconding the efforts of the legislature, we have now to contemplate its action in a humane and benign spirit, disregarding those hard economical rules, which would treat men, women, and children as mere machines for the production of wealth. Sir Robert Peel once said, that the great Italian writers on political economy charged those of England with discussing only the means of acquiring and distributing wealth, instead of regarding political economy as a complex and comprehensive science, concerning not only the wealth, but the morality and social welfare, of the people. “I must enquire,” said that eminent statesman (whom I regard as having been sincerely attached to the interests of the working classes), “what effect the working of the rules of political economy is likely to have on the morals of a country: and if it can be shewn that the application of those rules adds to the stock of wealth, but tends, at the same time, to the destruction of morals among the people, I certainly, to preserve those morals pure, will overlook and throw aside the rules of political

“economy.” On these principles he assisted in overthrowing the Truck Act in 1830; and in 1836, in speaking on the Factory Regulations Bill, thus expressed himself:—“One word on the danger of foreign competition, said to be likely to result from the measure. That is certainly a good ground for reducing the duty on cotton wool, but not for endangering the health of the factory children. I am, however, quite opposed to the imposition of any *severe* restrictions on labour, from the belief that they are calculated to undermine the commercial energies of the country, and thereby strike a blow against the happiness and comfort of the people.” Influenced by these last considerations, in the year 1847, he deprecated, I believe with perfect sincerity, and from conviction, the further limitation then proposed on the labour of women and children, in mills and factories. “It is my sincere conviction,” said he in the latter year “that it is not for the benefit of the working classes —that it will not tend to the advancement of their intellectual culture, or of their social improvement, to impose a new restriction on the hours of labour;” and he declared that “legislative restrictions on the labour of women and children, were only nominally such on them, but practically on the labour of adult males.” The legislature, however, has been of a different opinion, since the year 1833; when the first Factory Act (3 and 4 Wm. IV. c. 103.) was passed, reciting, “that it was necessary that the hours of labour, of children and young persons employed in mills and factories, should be regulated, inasmuch as there are great numbers of children and young persons now employed in them, and their hours of labour are longer than is desirable, due regard being had to their health and means of education.” By that statute many excellent regulations were made to mitigate such evils. And again, in the years 1844, 1847, 1850, and 1853, other acts were passed, further and further restricting the hours of labour of women, young persons, and children, in print-works, mills, and factories; carefully providing for their education; fixing the times for beginning and ending work, so as to prevent their toiling excessively, and at unseasonable hours; securing their holidays and periods for recreation, fixing their meal-times; securing the cleanliness and ventilation of the scenes of their toil; guarding them, as far as practicable against exposure to danger from machinery: and subjecting mills and factories to constant and systematic inspection, regulation, and periodical report to parliament, by medical men and government officers, whose business it is to see that the benevolent care of the legislature be not frustrated, or in anyway evaded.—Again, no woman, or girl of any age, and no boy under the age of ten years, is now allowed to work, on any pretence whatever, in any mine or colliery; and no boy can be apprenticed in such work under that age, nor for more than eight years. No young

person under twenty-one years of age, is allowed to enter any flue or chimney to sweep it, or extinguish fire : and no boy under sixteen years old can be apprenticed to a chimney-sweeper ; and even if he be, the moment he wishes it, a magistrate will discharge him from his articles.

While we cannot withhold our admiration from the philanthropic solicitude thus displayed by the legislature, to protect those who require protection, it were wild and perilous indeed, to disregard the commercial aspect of the question, as it affects employers, as well as the employed. The former must be really free, as well as the latter : it is surely but rational, just, and politic, to encourage, rather than discourage the enterprise of the manufacturer, and the investment of his capital. The contrary course would infallibly paralyze the arm that would uphold the working classes and elevate their condition in society. To put the question broadly—let us reduce the hours of daily labour to two, if we choose ; but we must not expect the master to pay for twelve. See, again, the competing considerations which have to be most anxiously borne in mind in all such movements !

Though from the highest considerations of humanity and morality, we choose thus to impose protective restrictions on the labour of women and children, the legislature does not interfere with the discretion of the adult male, in the disposal of his labour. He may, if he choose, and if he can, work for eighteen or twenty hours, or if he can afford it, only one or two, out of the twenty four. He is free to determine entirely for himself, guided by inclination, or necessity ; by a regard for his health, and a desire for leisure, recreation, and improvement.

We have at length, however, arrived at a topic of remarkable interest, importance, and of difficulty apparently insuperable, in which ever way it is approached, or looked at,—in its social, economical, moral, or legal aspect. It is, so to speak, the culminating point of the freedom of labour ; yet involving so many critical and delicate considerations, that I hardly know how to touch them at once satisfactorily, and with the brevity and simplicity befitting such an occasion as this.—Let me, however, at once leap right into the subject—or rather take the bull by the horns : and I choose to call those two horns, Work and Wages !

We have divine authority for saying that *the labourer is worthy of his hire* ; and that the employer may give what he pleases, and the employed is content to take, for that labour, as we learn from the parable of the Lord of the vineyard, which also shews that the agreement for the hire of labour, must be strictly performed.—*Friend, I do thee no wrong. Didst not thou agree with me for a penny ? Take that thine is, and go thy way !*—Labour is in truth a commodity for which one man naturally wants to get as much as he possibly can ; but unfortunately another as

naturally wants to get it for as little as he possibly can ! There is the difficulty, which has so long soured the tempers, worried the hearts, split the heads, and emptied the pockets of both parties ; especially as they have justly insisted on equal freedom : but there is no help for it. Nay, to such a height have disputes on this subject often risen, as to alarm the whole community ; to bring matters to a dead lock ; and society to the very verge of disorganization.—Let us, however, look the matter in the face.

Would you believe it, that down to the year 1824, two or three working men could not meet together, though never so peaceably, to settle what wages they would work for, and during what hours, without committing an offence, and being punished for it ? And while this was so, the masters were at full liberty to meet, and agree to give the men no more than a particular sum ! Was *that* freedom ? Was it justice ? I say, no. The late Mr. Hume, in that year (1824), brought that state of the law before parliament ; and thus justly stigmatized its cruel and flagrant injustice : “The law prevented the labouring classes of the community from combining together against their employers ; who, though few in number, were powerful in wealth, and might combine against *them*, and determine not to give them more than a certain sum for that labour. The workmen could not, however, consult together about the rate they ought to fix on that labour, without rendering themselves liable to fine and imprisonment, and a thousand other inconveniences which the law had reserved for them.” That eminent statesman, Mr. Huskisson, concurred in deprecating such a state of the law ; which he wisely said, “ creates between the employer and the employed, relations diametrically opposite to those which ought to exist : for they created jealousy, ill-will, and discontent ; instead of that feeling of good-will which was calculated to make each party stand by the other, in any period of mutual distress.” Well, a committee was forthwith appointed to enquire into and consider the whole matter ; and made such good use of their time (sitting for fifty days), that within four months, an act of parliament was passed, sweeping away no fewer than thirty-five statutes, the earliest which had been on the statute-book ever since the year 1305 ; most graciously ! enacting, that both men and masters might respectively combine against each other for such objects,—without being liable to punishment ! and making certain other important changes in the relations between employers and employed, one of which was a sufficiently startling one—that the men might combine to induce a fellow-workman to leave his master’s service, before his time was up ; to refuse to enter into service at all ; and to return work before it was finished !

It is difficult to understand what the legislature could have been about

But this crude and hasty enactment instantly produced dreadful results. Combinations, or rather conspiracies, sprung up among workmen in every part of the kingdom, occasioning riot, bloodshed, and even murder:—and one of those combinations was bound together by this oath, so atrocious, that were it not on record in the authentic debates of the day, I would not cite it.—“I, A.B., do voluntarily swear, in the awful presence of “Almighty God, and before these witnesses, that I will execute with zeal “and sincerity, as far as in me lies, every task and injunction which the “majority of my brethren shall impose on me, in furtherance of our “common welfare; as—the chastisement of nobles, *the assassination of “oppressive and tyrannical masters!* or the demolition of shops that shall “be deemed incorrigible: and also, that I will cheerfully contribute to “the support of such of my brethren as shall lose their work, in consequence of their exertions against tyranny, or shall renounce work in “resistance to a reduction of wages.” Is not this frightful?—See the result of well-meant but precipitate legislation! “The consequence “of it,” said the late distinguished Lord Ashburton, then Mr. Alexander Baring, “was, that every description of trade had been dictated to in “the most arbitrary manner, and if this system of combination be suffered “to extend, the consequences must be, that it would itself effectually “destroy the whole manufacturing interests of the country!” And on a subsequent occasion, during the same session, this eminent commercial authority stated, “That it was impossible not to see, from what was “going on around them, that instead of the system of combinations being “mitigated by the repeal of the laws prohibiting them, it had been extended “to a degree which seriously threatened, not only the peace of the “country, but the destruction of all its great interests.” It was however, by no means the masters, only, that suffered by these unnatural combinations: the peaceful workman, who was content to work for the wages offered by his master, was the victim of miserable persecution and violence by his fellow workmen, who, I suppose, imagined that that was protecting the *freedom of labour!* Parliament and the country were naturally and greatly alarmed; the mischievous act of 1824 was repealed the very next year, by a beneficial, and a more safe and just one, which continues at this moment the law of the land: the object of it being stated at the time, by its proposers, to be “to protect the weak against “the strong; and to afford to the man who chose to give his labour for “a certain value, that protection against the combination of large bodies, “to which every man was entitled.” This act only declares agreements entered into by men and masters, respectively, to lower or raise wages, or alter hours, or the mode of carrying on business, or otherwise affect their mutual relations, to be no longer punishable: the statute not saying in

terms that such agreements are lawful, but only that no one shall be *punished* for entering into them. It enacts, however, "That if any person shall force, or endeavour to force, by violence to person or property, by threats or intimidation, or by in any way molesting or obstructing another"—words of a studiously comprehensive character—"any hired workman to quit his work, or return it unfinished, or prevent his hiring himself, or taking work; or to force or induce him to belong to any club, or association, contribute to any fund, pay any fine or penalty, or for not doing so; or for refusing to obey rules and regulations for advancing or lowering wages, or lessening or altering the hours of working or the quantity of work; or alter the mode of carrying on any manufacture or business, or force or endeavour to force, any manufacturer or trader to alter his mode of carrying on his business, or limit the number or description of his apprentices, workmen, or servants;—that every person doing so, or aiding or abetting, or assisting therein, shall be liable to imprisonment, with hard labour, for three months."

That profound lawyer and also wise and moderate man, the late Chief Justice Tindal, expressly declared that this statute recognizes *as legal*, the rights of masters and men respectively, to assemble peaceably, and consult, determine, and agree on the rate of wages, and prices to be given and accepted, when that rate is in their opinion too high, or too low; but he also declared, that a man could not conceive more glaring acts of tyranny and despotism by one set of men over their fellows, than those prohibited by the statute. And he also left a precious relic of wisdom behind him, which I will present to you in his own admirable words.

"If there be one right, which, beyond all others, the labourer ought to be able to call his own, it is the right of the exertion of his own personal strength and skill, in the full enjoyment of his own free will, altogether unshackled by the control or dictates of his fellow-workman: yet strange to say, this very right, which the discontented workman claims for himself to its fullest extent, he does, by a blind perversity and unaccountable selfishness, entirely refuse to his fellows, who differ in opinion from himself! It is unnecessary to say, that a course of proceeding so utterly unreasonable in itself, so injurious to society, so detrimental to the interests of trade, and so oppressive against the rights of the poor man, must be a gross and flagrant violation of the law; and when the guilt is established, must be visited by a proper measure of punishment."

We have now seen the legislature trying to deal with this difficulty, viz.—what is to be done, when masters and men quarrel about the rate of wages. They said, at all events leave each free to do his best, peaceably,

to gain his end, of lowering or raising wages, of selling and buying labour as high or as low as possible. "They probably thought," said the same eminent judicial authority:—"That if the workmen on the one hand refused to work, or the master on the other refused to employ, as such a state of things could not continue long, it might fairly be expected that the party must ultimately give way, whose pretensions were not founded on reason and justice—the masters, if they offered too little, the workmen, if they demanded too much." But alas, if this be so, it leaves each party to decide on the reason and justice of his own pretensions, and the unreasonableness and injustice of those of his opponent!—What a quick and easy thing it is, to decide in one's own favour!—It is more likely, however, that the legislature said to itself, "it will always be a question of time; the weakest will go to the wall first, though not till after he has greatly hurt the stronger." This is sad work indeed; but it is one of the almost inevitable consequences of the freedom of labour. I am by no means insensible of the grave arguments urged against the repeal of the combination laws, at the time when that bold step was taken, by the legislature. I have thought, long and deeply about it, but have never been able to see the justice of upholding the distinction on which those laws are based. That step, however, is taken, and cannot be retraced. You can never revive the combination laws, come what may; the right is established, however perilous the facilities of abuse; and we must bear, as well as we can, the serious evils and inconveniences, which from time to time are called into existence by these unhappy and too often envenomed disputes.

One of our highest tribunals is at this moment occupied with a question of no small importance and difficulty, arising on this statute. It is an attempt by eighteen Lancashire mill-owners to enter into a counter combination. Their men having combined to support each other in forcing their masters to yield to their terms, the masters entered into a bond to each other not to open their mills for twelve months, except on terms agreed to by a majority: and the question before the court of Queen's Bench—a question you must observe, of pure political economy, to be decided by a court of law!—was whether such an agreement was consistent, or inconsistent, (as being in restraint of trade), and consequently with public policy. "I enter upon such considerations," said the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Campbell, "with much reluctance and with great apprehension, when I think how different generations of judges, and different judges of the same generation, have differed in opinion upon questions of political economy, and other topics connected with the adjudication of such cases." The court differed; but the majority held that the agreement was illegal, as unduly restraining the

freedom of trade : holding that if particular masters might thus combine, so might all the masters in the kingdom ; and on the other hand, all the men in the kingdom might combine themselves into a sort of labour parliament ! I have an opinion of my own on this question, but shall express none, as the matter is now in the breasts of the judges, and will, doubtless, ultimately be carried to the house of lords ; and the decision of that highest tribunal, either way, may possibly set the legislature again in motion, which may attempt to cut the Gordian knot, in some way or other, that may after all prove by no means satisfactory. But let me ask, need this wretched and destructive state of things continue ? Or is it, steadily and dispassionately looked at, deemed one that *ought* to exist, among men of intelligence and morality, as incapable of remedy, and must we be for ever risking civilization being driven against the spear-points of barbarism ? Indeed it will be so, as long as both parties to the question, or either party willingly yields to a short sighted, resentful, selfish, and over-reaching spirit, in dealing with each other. To come to the root of the matter, let both beware how they disregard the sublime teaching of Inspiration : which enjoins them to *let their moderation be known unto all men : and with well-doing, to put to silence the ignorance of foolish men : as free, and not using their liberty as a cloak of maliciousness*. But what is, what can be, more *malicious*, than for either party, or both parties, to *use their liberty*—the very utmost extent of the power undoubtedly wielded by each,—in order to coerce, injure, ruin, and starve those whom God has so visibly and benignantly brought together, in the peaceful relations of employers and employed—the most intimate and universal relation of life ? But it will of course be answered, that each party believes that he has reason and justice on his side : well, and in ninety-nine disputes out of a hundred, of every imaginable kind, may not the same be said ? Certainly :—but where each party reasonably believes the interests at stake to be vital, he ought the more to distrust his own judgment, as unduly influenced and prepossessed, and seek the counsel of those who are not disqualified by being identified in interest.

I can suggest no specific for these malignant disorders, except the true christian feeling, which as effectually prevents, as cures them : which allays excitement, and extinguishes resentment : which applies the golden, the divine rule of action, *do unto others, as you would they should do unto you !* If I might be listened to, I would say, believe one who works as hard for his livelihood as any of you ; whose sympathies and interests are bound up with labour, as the only capital with which God has entrusted him, that the only real remedy is that which I have indicated—Christianity,—our common Christianity : the heavenly mag-

net that attracts all hearts; the only solvent of our selfishness; the gentle regulator of wayward wills and tempers; the styptic for a wounded spirit; the very sum of love. And how would Christianity practically act? By prescribing calmness, candour, and a genial spirit of conciliation. It would tell each party to make large allowances, if only to secure a common interest. Each ought honestly to place himself, for a moment, in the other's situation, when each might see causes in operation which he might never otherwise have perceived, trials and difficulties of which he had not dreamed. Let the master look steadily at the position of the working man, especially in hard times, pressed down to the earth with exhausting labour, anxiety, and galling privations endured by himself, and his family,—often almost maddening him, as he feels that it is *in vain for him to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrow!* In such moments of despondency and despair, he feels as though the appalling language of the Prophet were sounding in his ears, *son of man, eat thy bread with quaking, and drink thy water with trembling, and with carefulness!*—He cannot keep himself, and those towards whom his harrassing heart yearns so tenderly, from the very jaws of starvation, with all his patience, economy, and sobriety; and yet he sees, out of the fruits of *his* labour, his employers *apparently* rolling in riches, and revelling in luxury and splendour! But let that workman, on the other hand, do as he would be done by; let his master (who may have risen to be such from the workman's own rank, after a life of hard labour, honourable conduct, and superior energy) deal with his capital, which happens to be his money, as the workman with his, which happens to be his labour, *freely*. Let him reflect on the anxieties and dangers to which his employer is often exposed, but dare not explain or make public, lest it should injure or ruin his credit: his capital may be locked up in machinery, or he may otherwise be unable to realize it, however desperate his emergency, without a destructive sacrifice: great but perfectly legitimate speculations may have failed, from causes he could not foresee or control—from accident, from the fraud or misfortune of others, from a capricious change in public taste. He may have been running desperately, but with an honest spirit, along the black line of bankruptcy itself, for many months, without his workmen dreaming of it, and yet has punctually paid their weekly wages to perhaps several, or many hundreds of them, often borrowing at heavy interest, to do so, while the workmen supposed him always the master of untold thousands!—Now I say, let each party try to think of all these things, and pause, before he commit himself to a rash and ruinous line of hostility. A strike, as it is called—(word of ill omen to those forced to join in one!) too often partakes of the nature of a social suicide. Capital—that is

labour and money—at war with itself, may be compared to the madman, who in a sudden phrenzy dashes each of his fists against the other, till both are bleeding, and disabled perhaps for ever.

The thinking part of the public often considers that it sees faults in each party to these direful conflicts; but whether both or only one be in fault, the public laments to see each inflicting on the other wounds which it will take a long time to heal, if they be not even incurable, engendering a truly cancerous condition of feeling, destructive of the very relation itself between employer and employed. But I quit this painfully interesting—this vitally important topic, with two observations. First, a practical security against flagrant wrong on either side may be found in the knowledge, by each party, of the very power thus possessed by the other, and which operates, so to speak, by way of a salutary preventive check: as a sword hanging *in terrorem* over the heads of each, watching the other's movements, and tendency to over-reaching. Secondly, if no friendly interference be invoked by both,—if over-reaching and resentment must have its sway—let both parties reflect, the master, that the workman is free to take his labour, the workman, that the master is free to take his capital, *abroad*: while British industry, ingenuity, and capital, have surely enough to do already, to hold their own against those of foreign countries.

Again, let each party sincerely try to respect the other, to find out and dwell on those qualities, really, and to so large an extent entitling each to the other's respect and sympathy. Let the master reflect on the patience, aye, the truly heroic patience, self-denial, fortitude, and energy with which the workman endures severe trials and privations; and let the workman reflect on the fairness and moderation, often under circumstances of serious difficulty, on the generosity and munificence of his master: as could be testified by tens of thousands of grateful workmen, in seasons of sickness, suffering, and bereavement.

II.—We have now taken a comprehensive, and I hope a correct view of the rights of labour, all really resolvable into its freedom.

But we have already seen, I am sure, that the exercise of these rights of itself suggests many of the DIFFICULTIES with which labour has to contend, and those often of a serious and severe character. Besides these, however, it has others to arm against.

That labour was originally designed as the lot of man, is shewn by Holy Scripture; in the earliest pages of which we find it significantly stated, that, before plants were in the earth, and herbs grew,—*there was not a man to till the ground*:—but as soon as he had been formed, he was put into the *Garden of Eden*, to dress and to keep it, with permission freely to eat of every tree in it, except one. That one, nevertheless, he

impiously chose to eat, and was no longer suffered to remain tenant of the garden, but was thrust out, into *ground* which he was told was *cursed for his sake*: he was *to eat of it in sorrow all the days of his life*; it was *to bring forth thorns and thistles*: and in the sweat of his face he was *to eat bread, till he returned to the ground from which he had been taken*. See alas! how woefully different became the exertion, which had originally been ordained as a pleasant and elevating recreation, and the labour which was thenceforth to become hard and humiliating, as the consequence of disobedience! This is the gloomy original of the *Difficulties* of labour: and one has but to utter the word, for its sad significance to appear as a matter of personal experience.—While pure intellectual labour has its own exquisite gratifications, so it has its special drawbacks and difficulties, of a physical, moral, and intellectual character, often harrassing enough separately, but far more formidable in combination. Some of them, again, seem almost in the nature of necessary conditions of labour, in the present state of things; others, however, are attributable to evil habits;—some are such as may be mitigated or alleviated by the labourer himself, and by those whose social position, advantages, and opportunity afford them the means of doing so. And no one with a spark of manly sympathy in his composition, can contemplate, unmoved, the spectacle of another bowed down with unremitting and monotonous physical labour, from morning till night, which is of itself calculated to depress the animal spirits, to sour the temper, to paralyse the mental faculties, and prematurely exhaust the physical energies. Ought not ready and large allowances to be made for the short-comings of a man so situated? Ought we not to reflect what a gloomy aspect life too often wears to one condemned to look at it through the chilling and darkened medium of wearisomness, anxiety, disappointment, and despondency?—whose utmost exertions fail to secure even the minor comforts and pleasures of life and society—nothing beyond a bare and even precarious existence? Talk to *him*! of the pleasures of home! and snug fire-side! as worn out with toil he returns from workshop or manufactory, to his lodgings, in a close and filthy neighbourhood, only to meet misery looking out of the sunken eyes, and reflected from cheeks white and wasted, it may be, with both sickness and want, and this too—not every now and then, but day after day, week after week, month after month, and year after year! Callous and worthless must he be, who can put harsh constructions on everything said or done by such an one; and blessed indeed he, who, by his wisdom or beneficence, is able to alleviate the condition of the working classes, or any section or individual of them. “The great evil of the present day”—said the late Sir Robert Peel, in the year 1830,—“is a tendency to

“diminish the enjoyments of the humbler classes, to lower them in the scale of society, and widen their separation from the upper classes.”—Seventeen years afterwards—after an interval in which so much had been nobly done to remedy these evils, he thus addressed the house of commons, “I feel that in improving the condition and elevating the character of the working classes, we are advancing the first and highest interests. I feel that society is not safe unless we can do that. We are giving these classes intellectual improvement; but unless the general character of our legislature be to increase their comfort and to improve their moral habits, their mere intellectual improvement will become a source of danger and not of strength. By every means, then—by the improvement of the sanitary conditions of our towns, by substituting innocent recreations for vicious and sensual indulgence, we should do all in our power to increase the enjoyments and improve the character of the working classes. I firmly believe that the hopes of the future peace, happiness, and prosperity of this country, are closely interwoven with the improvement, *religious as well as moral*, of those classes.” There spoke the enlightened and philanthropic christian statesman; and no one is worthy of that lofty name, who does not heartily adopt, and vigorously act upon, those views.

The words which I have quoted, may be said to contain the heads of a code of regulations adapted to promote the greatest happiness of the greatest number! They indicate at the same time, infallibly, four grand *difficulties* with which labour has to contend—and which, if I may be allowed so to express myself, are like four Evil Eyes, ever fixed upon it—Irreligion, Ignorance, Improvidence, Intemperance. These may be regarded as four evil spirits, knowing the weak and exposed parts of labour, and assailing it with difficulties not necessarily incident to its condition, and which are removable. The first, Irreligion, hides from the labourer all that *dignity and consolation* of which I shall shortly have to speak; reduces him even beneath the level of the beasts that perish; and infinitely aggravates all the natural and inevitable difficulties of labour. Ignorance is to be regarded as the faithful attendant of Irreligion; seconding all her efforts, and striking down every safeguard with which sound knowledge might surround labour. That sound knowledge would shew the true character and object of labour of every kind; would distinguish between necessary and needless evils and inconveniences; help to bear the one, and avoid the other; point out the duties, as well as the real interest of the labourer, and render harmless those who would seek to delude and lead him astray, for their own selfish and destructive purposes. Sound knowledge would enable the labouring classes to appreciate and second the efforts of a wise and benignant legislature,

instead of rendering them useless. He is a shallow and presumptuous person who would attempt or affect to under-value the intelligence of the working classes of the country. Had it been otherwise, rest assured that Great Britain would not be what she is, at this moment, but very, very far otherwise. Our beneficent God does not so often separate a strong brain from strong arms, as such coxcombs would suppose, although he may place the one in circumstances requiring less direct *activity* than the other : but keen mother wit, helped by a right honest heart, has enabled our English working classes to weather storms of difficulty and danger, that would have overthrown others, and have done so. Sound knowledge also enables the working man to form a correct judgment concerning his relations to workmen in foreign countries, and the serious efforts requisite, incessantly continued, to sustain a noble rivalry essential to the welfare of our country. One well educated workman is worth a dozen who are not so, and has more than as many times their chances of advancement. And if many years' observation and reflection entitle me to make a recommendation, it would be, that the working classes would find it of the highest value, to acquire in a general way, as they could with a little effort,—for instance, by plain and good lectures in this very place—some knowledge of the circumstances which determine the *rate of wages*. That is a question, in its higher and remoter branches, of extreme difficulty, and some uncertainty ; but its elementary principles are pretty well agreed upon now, and directly touch the only capital of the poor man—his labour, and teach him how to set a true and not exaggerated and chimerical value on it, at times when the keenest dispute has arisen on that very subject. Oh, what incalculable benefits might arise from a knowledge, by the acute working classes, of the leading principles, agreed upon by great thinkers, statesmen, and economists of every shade of opinion, as those regulating the relation between employers and employed, and establishing, not a conflict, but an absolute identity of interest ! How much heart-burning and heart-breaking, and how many hundreds of thousands of pounds might not have been spared within the last thirty years ! I would allude also to another difficulty attending the exercise of labour, and springing out of that mighty agent of its efficacy—the division of labour. It has been well said by the eminent Adam Smith, and indeed tallies with our own observation and experience, that “ the man “ whose whole life is spent in performing a few simple operations, of “ which the effects, too, are always the same, has no occasion to exert his “ understanding, or exercise his invention in finding out expedients for “ removing difficulties which never occur.” More would any of yourselves give a pin's head for the head of him who has spent twelve hours a day for thirty years, solely in making pins' heads ? Understand, that the prin-

ciple of the division of labour, is as sound, as its application is powerful beyond calculation: nevertheless, it really is attended with such a drawback. I was forcibly struck by a statement made a month or two ago, by one of our greatest engineering commanders, on his return from the Crimea, as the result of his personal observation: that our glorious soldiers, recruited from our manufacturing ranks, magnificent in bravery, were yet helpless in camp service: "few could handle a spade or mattock decently,"—I quote his own words,—“fewer still an axe, a saw, a hammer, a trowel; few could mend their own clothes, fewer still their shoes; very few could cook their own victuals.”—and he continues thus—“This sort of helplessness in our soldier, arises from a similar helplessness of the classes of our population, which furnish the recruits. The minute sub-division of labour in a highly civilized country, reduces the individuals subject to it, to a condition as helpless, whenever they are separated from it, and thrown on their own resources, as if the arts of civilized life had never been invented. But that is not its most important influence. This restriction of a man’s daily occupation, to the production, so to speak, of the fractional part of an unit, tends to narrow and cramp the intellect, and restrain versatility of mind, and variety of ideas, unless counteracted by active and effective educational means, tending to expand and elevate the mind.” These are weighty truths, forced into utterance by actual recent observation, on a scene of ensanguined splendour, and are worthy I earnestly assure you, of your best consideration. What then, however? Far be it from the workman to turn “Jack of all trades and master of none;” on the contrary, *whatever his hand findeth to do, let him do it with his might*; but let him, especially him in younger life, seize every spare moment, to acquire, not shewy and delusive, but useful practical knowledge, likely to make him a first-rate workman—enabling him to take advantage of every opportunity that may present itself—but to be snatched at, successfully, *only by such an one*. And let me plead with every fond father and mother present, on behalf of their children:—give them, poor things! a fair chance! Spare no effort, shrink from no privation, in a noble spirit, to give them early a good *practical* education,—reading, writing, arithmetic, the elements of Geography, mechanics, and chemistry—for which they will bless you a thousand times, and perhaps have it in their power to make you hereafter rich returns.

The sub-division of labour leads me finally to remark, that a great part of the machinery used in those manufactures where labour is most sub-divided, has been the invention of common workmen, to whom that very sub-division of labour had suggested it; and the mention of machinery may remind us of another instructive instance of the way in which know-

ledge enlightens society, and shews its true interests to be best served often by these discoveries which threatened to destroy them. Need I do more than mention the case of the hand-loom weavers, and the power-loom ? And the working classes now see clearly how groundless are the old apprehensions on the subject of machinery : whose utility in application to manufactures, consists in the addition which it makes to human power ; its economy of human time ; its conversion of substances almost worthless into articles of great value, and the increased command which it gives society over the necessities and comforts of life. The forces derived from wind, water, and steam, are so many vast additions to human powers ; and M. Dupin has calculated, that the amount of inanimate force thus obtained, is equivalent, in Great Britain, alone, to an addition of twenty millions of labourers !

The other two sources of the difficulties of labour, are to be looked for in Improvidence, and Intemperance. God forbid that I should be so unjust, and slanderous, as to charge the working classes generally with these,—especially with the latter : for I believe in my conscience, that whoever knows most of the working classes of England, as a class, will be loudest in praise of their sobriety ; they work too hard, have too little time and money, and are inspired by nobler principles of morality and religion, than to be drunkards. But there are, alas, as we all know, exceptions, and they are numerous.

Round how many necks have these two evil habits—of Improvidence and Intemperance—hung, for their whole lives, like millstones ; keeping men of the strongest heads and arms prostrate in poverty and misery—and not themselves only, but their poor dependant families ! And how ready are such men to attribute such effects to—bad luck ! Bad luck, indeed ?—Bad luck will ever be to him, and ill will fare his house, who invites these two Evil Spirits to be his guests ! Inviting them, or suffering them to come in—or shutting them out,—in nine cases out of ten, makes all the difference between one workman and another, between good and evil fortune, between a happy and a miserable, an unhappy and a dishonorable life, indeed, in every rank of society. These two Evil Ones are on the very best terms with each another ; so to speak, they hunt in couples ; they devour their victim together ! There may, however, be improvidence without intemperance,—improvidence springing from a weakness and thoughtlessness, which are highly criminal, when we consider the consequences to which they lead. They entail misery not only on him who is guilty of them, but on the innocent ; and keep the wolf, *want*, at the door, grimly squatting there with greedy teeth and cruel glittering eyes, waiting for that door to open, that he may spring in and devour ! And that man is laying in a certain stock of misery, probably for life, who

marries without having first prudently ascertained that he has a reasonable prospect of being able to maintain a family. Nor is it less morally certain that wretchedness and ruin will overtake him and his family, who constantly spends all he earns, though, with a little self-denial, he might lay by, if only a trifle at first, that which would gradually increase, and give him, in contemplating it, an increasing sense of self-respect, confidence, and independence,—providing in even the brightest sunshine of health; and full work, against a rainy day. “The amount of weekly earnings,” said the late Sir Robert Peel, in one of his latest speeches, “is the great point on which the happiness and independence of a working man’s family turns. You cannot over-estimate the importance to these men, of a small saving,—of the possession of some such sum as £10 or £12. It may be to them the foundation of future independence. It may enable the father of a family, imitating the honorable example of the honorable member for Salford,”—(Mr. Brotherton, who was at that moment in the house of commons), “to gather that family round him, and say,—from these small gains I will lay the foundation of a fortune, such as hundreds in Lancashire have acquired by their own industry and integrity. I, myself,” continued he, “could name at least ten individuals in Lancashire, who, when I was a boy, were earning 25s. or 30s. a week, and each of them is now worth from £50,000 to £100,000.”—And let me, to night, ask, can the good old town of Hull point to no such instances? of men, who have, so to speak, risen from the ranks, and by patience, economy, judgment, enterprise, and honour, and with God’s blessing on their efforts, become the most opulent and distinguished among their fellow townsmen? Perhaps I need not go out of this hall at this moment, to find such a cheering instance!

But I hope, and believe, that I *must* go out of this hall to find a victim of *intemperance*. Such a man, or rather wreck of a man, is not likely to be found *here*. I know, however, where to find him. There is another hall, in which I took my seat this morning, have sat all day, and shall be at my gloomy post again all tomorrow, to see, possibly, trembling, or sullen and desperate, at the bar of Justice, one whom the untiring and remorseless fiend, Intemperance, has dragged thither, and stands unseen, but in grim exultation beside his victim. He *had* been a man, might one say, well to do in the world, and getting respected by all his neighbours, till ‘*he took to drink*,’ and then it was all up with him—and there he stands! disgraced, and in despair. I need not draw on my imagination for illustrations: especially before an audience, among whom, doubtless, are so many whose painful duty, as jurymen, it is, to sit every sessions with myself, engaged in the administration of criminal justice. You have seen how often, in a moment of voluntary madness occasioned

by drink, a life's character has been sacrificed, the brand of felon ! impressed on the brow, and free labour exchanged for that which is profitless, compulsory, and ignominious to the workman, within the abhorred walls of a prison !—It would be unjust however, not to say, that exhausting labour, and the companionship of those who are together so exhausted, supplies but too many temptations to seek the refreshment and exhilaration afforded by liquor, which soon, however, degenerates from an occasional enjoyment, into an accursed habit. Home, soon ceases to be home, to him who returns to it under the guilty delirium of intoxication. There, weeping and starving wife and children appear like dismal spectres, flitting before his blood-shot eye and reeling brain. As the husband frequents the dram-shop, so he drives his wretched wife to the pawnshop, and her and his children at length to the workhouse : or perhaps in her desperation—but I dare not proceed ! The Coroner can tell the rest.

Look at yonder desolate little room, at the end of a dreary court : a funeral will go out from it in the morning ! Enter this evening ! all is silent, and a small candle on the mantle-piece sheds a dull flickering light on a coffin, the lid not yet screwed down :—beside it, sits, morally, a murderer : his bloated face is hid in his shaking hands : he has not yet ventured to move aside the coffin-lid ; but, at length, he dares to do so, and to take a last look at his poor victim—his broken-hearted wife ! Poor, poor soul ! 'Thou art gone at last ! Gone *where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest*. “ 'Tis a happy release,” say the friendly neighbours who have contributed their little means, to lay her decently in her coffin ! Aye, besotted husband ! let your blood-shot eyes look now on that white face, that wreck of a face so sweet and pretty when you married ! Nay, man, never fear ! The eyes are closed for ever, and will weep, and look mournfully at you, no more. Dare you touch those limbs, which the woman who laid them out said, with a sigh, were *mere skin and bone* ? Dare you take hold of that cold hand ? Do you see the wedding ring, and think of the day you put it on her finger ?—Will you remove it, or let it be buried as the badge of your breach of plighted troth, at God's altar ? Do you see how the finger is worn with the needle ? During the day, during the night, this poor starved, heart-broken creature was your willing slave, with wearied eyes, and aching heart,—mending your linen, and that of your poor children—(do you hear their little sobs in the next room ?) and what was left of her own, which, alas, poor soul ! were nearly rags after all ! Look again, man, at the sad figure in the coffin ! Do you see the scar on that cheek ? Look, and tremble ! Have you forgotten the blow that caused it ! given by your hand of drunken and ruffian violence ? Yet she never reproached you ! And when, at length, worn away with misery, starvation and ill-usage, she was forced to give up the struggle for life, her last

--her very last act, was gently and in silence to squeeze your unworthy hand ! Perhaps remorse is *now* wringing your heart ; and you groan—

“ O, if she would but come again,

I think I'd grieve her so no more ! ”

—But no ! she will come to you no more on earth : yet, you shall meet again ! So, man ! . . . close the coffin lid ! Go to bed and sleep, sleep if you can. The funeral is in the morning, and you must follow the poor wasted body close past your favourite dram-shop . . . ! Well, let us turn from that dismal little funeral, and if we can, dismiss it from our minds, but not the lesson which it may have taught. It may be, that we have looked on one whom death will *sober*, and reclaim, the chief mourner—he may return to habits of industry and temperance : he may at length find inclination and leisure to seek for rational enjoyments in the pursuit of useful and elevating knowledge, and seek it in scenes like these :—and let me cover* this gloomy sketch, by a cheering little picture by the admirable Dr. Paley :—

“ I have no propensity ” says he, “ to envy any one, least of all, the rich and great ; but if I were disposed to this weakness, the subject of my envy would be,—a healthy young man, in full possession of his strength and faculties, going forth in the morning to work for his wife and children, and bringing them home his wages at night.”

And I shall take my leave of the difficulties of labour, by another short quotation, a passage from the illustrious Edmund Burke, which has a thousand times consoled me, in hours of fatigue and depression :—

“ Difficulty is a severe instructor, set over us by the supreme ordinance of a parental Guardian and Legislator, who knows us better than we know ourselves, as he loves us better too ! ”

With this healthy tone communicated to our feelings, let us approach the last department of our subject, and see whether labour, though it have its difficulties, has not also its dignity and consolations,—aye, real DIGNITY and rich CONSOLATIONS.

III. and IV.—Insects can labour, and for themselves : witness the bee, and the ant. Animals can labour for mankind : witness the horse, and the ox ; but we cannot discover that they are conscious of the reason, the conditions, and the objects of their labour. They are insects of an hour ; they are beasts that perish. And what, alas ! shall we say of the labour of the serf, or the slave ? In whom man has impiously done his best to extinguish the divine spark of intelligence—to palsy the moral and intellectual nature of his fellow-man, and reduce him, as far as may be, to the level of the mere beast of the field ; to strip him of those thoughts, feelings, and associations which alone can invest labour with interest or dignity ! Why do I again allude to this dismal and humiliating incident

in the history of human labour, and why have I so carefully traced its emancipation from fetter after fetter, bound round it by the hands of oppression, and mistaken policy? One object is, to shew that a great source of the true *dignity* of labour, is to be found in its freedom;—to point attention closely to the contrast between modern free labour, and serfdom and slavery, between existing freedom, and the deplorable condition of ancient slavery. Then may any reflecting mind appreciate what is signified by the *dignity* of labour! I lay it down boldly, that with free and virtuous men, there is no kind of labour that cannot be invested with dignity; a dignity depending on the spirit in which it is undergone, and the objects for which it is undertaken. Even compulsory labour, and designed to be degrading—the labour of the felon,—may be performed with dignity,—if the unfortunate labourer be conscious that he is the victim of injustice. Such a man, animated by calm fortitude, inspired by faith in God's providence, and not inflamed and envenomed by feelings of vindictiveness towards those who may intentionally or unintentionally have done him injustice,—may exhibit to any competent observer, a dignity amounting to grandeur. *For what glory is it, if when ye be buffeted for your faults ye shall take it patiently? But if, when you do well, and suffer for it, ye take it patiently, this is acceptable unto God.*

Here, labour may be regarded as the magnet drawing out the noblest qualities of man's nature; the very touchstone of his character. Again, consider what a dignity is derived from triumphing over the difficulties attending labour, in its severest conditions, and however humble its character, and in the sight of man contemptible, but not so before the eyes of Him who imposed labour on his intelligent and responsible creatures. Let me remind you, with deep reverence, concerning whom it was wonderingly asked—*Is not this the carpenter? the carpenter's son?* Who were his disciples, but *fishermen*? And was not the great Apostle of the Gentiles, *of the craft of tent-makers*? And can we forget the melting pathos and dignity with which he declared, that *he had coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel, but with his own hands had ministered to his necessities, and those that were with him?* After this, let no christian man, whatever be his rank, or wealth, presume to think lightly of labour—of the humblest handicraft labour! O, my friends, be persuaded, on the contrary, that systematic self-denial,—resistance to temptation, cheerful fortitude where requital is but little, or even nothing; in short, all labour, though only to procure the meat that perisheth, if done in the fear of God, has in it true dignity.—It were needless to speak of the dignity reflected by the higher kinds of labour, on those who voluntarily and disinterestedly strive to advance the welfare of mankind,—the cause of intellectual, social, moral, and religious progress; and that dignity is enhanced in-

calculably, if those labours be undertaken, and steadfastly continued in spite of misrepresentation, calumny, and persecution.—Thus we see that the dignity of labour is derived from the spirit in which it is undergone, and the objects which it seeks to attain: for there is labour which is entirely useless and contemptible, and undertaken from only foolish motives; there is also labour which degrades beneath the level of the brutes,—labour undertaken for immoral and vicious objects, and to which is attached the blighting curse of God! But it has frequently occurred to me, that another consideration invests labour—the labour of the ordinary mechanic and artizan—with a great, but an often unperceived dignity; for he may, with deep humility and reverence, be said, in a certain sense, to be a *fellow-worker* with God. He is himself—(and never, never, let him forget the glorious and awful dignity with which he is invested) made in God's image, intellectually as well as morally; he thereby is graciously enabled to acquire no small knowledge of the method and objects of God's working, in creating, and continuing the action, of all material things; and even himself uses the same agencies with which he sees the Almighty Maker of all things, working. Is not the very thought sublime, and does it not shed splendour around even the common operations of man's hands? There is a relation by which the eye of the practical man may be guided to that God who works with him in every operation of his skill. “Every work of human art or skill,; it has been finely observed, * “is a thing done by a creature of God, made in his own image; and operating on matter governed by the same laws which He, in the beginning, infixed in it, and to which He subjected the first operations of His own hands: a *creature* in whom is implanted reason of a like nature with that excellent reason by which the heavens were stretched forth:—living power, as that of a worm and as a vapour that passeth away,—but yet, an emanation from Omnipotence: a perception of beauty and adaptation akin to that whence flowed the magnificence of the universe: and to control these, a volition whose freedom has its remote analogy, and its source, in that of the first Self-existent and Independent Cause. How full of *pride* is the thought, that in every exercise of human skill, in each ingenious adaptation, and in each complicated contrivance and combination of art, there is included the exercise of a faculty akin to the wisdom manifested in the creation! How full of *humility* in the comparison, which, placing the most consummate efforts of human skill by the side of one of the simplest works of nature, shews us but one or two rude steps of approach to it! How full of *proxi* too, thus to perceive our God in everything! To find Him working *with* us, and *in* us, in the daily occupations of our hands; wherein we do but re-produce, under different and inferior forms, His own

* The Reverend H. Moseley.—Illustrations of Mechanics.

perfect and infinite wisdom, and creative power." Surely, my friends, such considerations are solemnizing and elevating, even to a mind endowed with but moderate powers of reflection, and rendering interesting the most ordinary labours of the mechanic.

He may feel, *then*, that he is not alone in his daily toils, but in the click, and din, and roar of the most minute or stupendous engines of man's construction, alike as in the scenes of monotonous and silent labour,—with a soul attuned to high sympathies, and capable of acting from superior motives, he may say—

"I see a hand *you* cannot see,
I hear a voice *you* cannot hear"—

You, who are content to play the animal,—to labour merely to live from hand to mouth, and say dismally, *let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die*. The soul of him whom I am speaking, is warmed and brightened by a light on the other side of the grave, shining through it, and illuminating his darkest path through life. These are the secret sources of strength which brace the nerves, which strengthen the arms, and support the heart of the virtuous workman. It is this which gives him the sense and habit, precious above the price of rubies, of calm self-reliance, of a courage before which everything will, sooner or later, assuredly give way. He is energetic and persevering, because he simply obeys his Divine Master's command—*whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might*; he does so, and leaves the rest to Him whose eye is never closed, and with whom is the disposing of every event. It is this which gains him the cordial confidence and warm regards of employer and work-fellows, who will stand by him in any trouble that may befall him; for they say, he is an honest man; his heart is in the right place, towards God and man; he is free from vicious habits, he is a credit to his order, and to his neighbourhood; and he is the idol of his home. See, when things go only moderately well with him, *there*, what sympathy! what fond love ever await him! Anxiety and apprehensions may chill and dishearten while he is away; but oh, the affectionate arms that are thrown round him, the kiss that awaits him from the dear confiding partner of his joys, his hopes, his fears, his sufferings! And if God see fit to favor his efforts, as he has formed no vain hopes and exaggerated expectations, so he is easily contented, and has cause to be, for his children are treading in his steps. He is of such temperate habits, that he is independent of those artificial wants and excitements which so many others cannot do without, however burthensome they may have become. His eye is so clear and bright, and the expression of his face is so frank and cheerful, that it cheers you to look at him! There is not a day or a night that he does not feel how precious is the blessing of health of body, and the tranquility of mind to

which it so largely contributes. He envies not the rich and great, for he knows to what anxiety and misery they are often subject. He says, cheerfully, with the wise man, as he retires to rest after his frugal repast, *the sleep of the labouring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much ; but the abundance of the rich man will not suffer him to sleep.* This is the man whom God delighteth to honour, and to whom, as to one, who has been well schooled and tried by difficulties and troubles, He so often, sometimes slowly, sometimes suddenly, throws open the way to wealth and distinction. But what if it be otherwise ? So long as God gives him health, contentment, and sufficient for his necessities,—*neither poverty, nor riches, but feeds him with food convenient for him ;* so long as he has intervals for rest and recreation, and the cultivation of his intellectual faculties ; so long as he is respected abroad, and beloved at home, what cares this man,—this true nobleman,—for the frowns of the world ? For the wealth and honors which so many others pine for in vain ? On and on he goes, along the journey of life, knowing that he is immortal, and feeling that he has never forgotten that glorious and sustaining truth : and even should he lose the favour of an earthly master, he is serving a Heavenly Master whom he shall, by and by, when he has *rested from his labours,* assuredly hear saying, *Well done ! thou good and faithful servant.*